



DECISION MEMO

Hamby Saddle Hazard Tree Removal



**USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forest
Red River Ranger District
Idaho County, Idaho**

I. Background

I have decided to authorize the Hamby Saddle Hazard Tree Removal project located on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, Idaho County, Idaho in Township 31 North, Range 7 East, Sections 29 and 30 (See attached map).

II. Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to remove dead and dying trees within 200 ft. of Forest Service Road 464. The numerous spruce snags along FSR 464 pose a hazard to the visiting public. Removing the hazard trees is needed to provide for the safe use of FSR 464. The road is also a groomed snowmobile route, so removing the hazard trees will increase safety for winter users.

Decision

I have decided to approve the Hamby Saddle Hazard Tree Removal project with the following terms and conditions. A timber sale purchaser will cut and remove dead and dying hazard trees within 200 feet of Forest Service Road 464 for approximately 1.25 miles (total approximately 60 acres). In areas over 35% slopes the purchaser will pull cable to down trees. Equipment to be used includes feller bunchers, chainsaws, skidders, loaders, and logging trucks. Slash will be piled at the landing and burned post-harvest by Forest Service fire personnel.

The project area is accessed by and the haul route will be Forest Service Road 464. Roadways will be signed with warning signs for logging and hauling operations. No temporary roads will be constructed.

Design Criteria and Mitigation Measures

BMPs for Water Quality and Weed Management will be implemented during the project. The following Design Criteria are not all-inclusive, as Forest Plan standards are incorporated by reference:

- PACFISH default buffers would be used: No harvest will occur within 300 feet of fish-bearing streams (if present) and 150 feet of perennial non-fish bearing water.
- Logging will not occur within riparian areas.
- Landings and skid trails will be scarified after use.

- Remove all mud, soil, and plant parts from off road equipment and equipment being used for road maintenance before moving into project area to limit the spread of noxious weeds. Conduct cleaning off National Forest lands.
- Halt ground-disturbing activities if cultural resources are discovered until an approved Archaeologist can properly evaluate and document the resources in compliance with 36 CFR 800.

Project Implementation: The project will be implemented in 2018. The timber harvest will take approximately one year to complete, with pile burning accomplished post-harvest.

III. Rationale for Decision and Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Decision

A. Category of Exclusion and Rationale for Using the Category

Based on information in this document and the project record, I have determined this project is not significant in either context or intensity (40 CFR 1508.27), that no extraordinary circumstances affecting resource conditions exist (36 CFR 220.6), that this project may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS, and that it meets all the criteria outlined in 36 CFR 220.6(d)(13) *Salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction. The proposed action may include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing.*

The rationale for my decision is based on: (1) the proposed action fully meeting the criteria for Categorical Exclusions, (2) the proposed action meeting the purpose and need, (3) the findings related to extraordinary circumstances, (4) the project's consistency with laws and regulations, and (5) the on-the-ground review and discussion with District resource specialists.

B. Finding of the Absence of Significant Adverse Effects to Extraordinary Circumstances

Based on the findings for resource conditions described below, I have determined that no extraordinary circumstances are associated with my decision. Forest Service direction at 36 CFR 220.6(b) describes the resource conditions that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstance related to the proposed action warrant further analysis and documentation in an EIS or EA.

Additionally, 36 CFR 220.6(b) states, *"The mere presence of one of more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion. It is the existence of a cause-effect relationship between a proposed action and the potential effect on these resource conditions and if such a relationship exists, the degree of the potential effect of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determines whether extraordinary circumstances exist."*

1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat or Forest Service sensitive species.

The Forest Interdisciplinary (ID) Team Wildlife Biologist, Fisheries Biologist and Botanist have determined the project would have no significant effects to federally listed and R1 Sensitive wildlife, fish and plant species and/or their habitats. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified for these resources.

2. Floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds.

Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds are not present within the project area. The reduction of conifer encroachment could have beneficial effects to groundwater, which could have beneficial effects to surface waters in the long term.

The proposed project is consistent with all applicable State and Federal water quality laws for water resources. The activities are also consistent with soil and water standards in the Clearwater National Forest Plan, including the PACFISH amendment.

Based on this analysis, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to floodplains, wetlands, and municipal watersheds.

3. Congressionally designated areas, such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas or National Recreation Areas.

The project area is not located in any congressionally designated area, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

4. Inventoried Roadless areas or potential wilderness areas.

The project area is not located in an inventoried roadless area, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to this resource.

5. Research Natural Areas.

The proposed activities are not within or adjacent to any Research Natural Areas.

6. American Indians and Alaska native religious or cultural sites.

An appropriate inventory has been conducted for the above project and cultural resources are known to be located within the area of potential effects. Concurrence from the Idaho SHPO is thus required, however, the Forest Cultural Resource Specialist has made a preliminary determination that the project will have *no adverse effect* to these properties because:

- The project has been designed to avoid effects to significant components/features associated with listed, eligible or unevaluated cultural resource sites.

Concurrence from the Idaho SHPO on the determination was received on November 9, 2017.

7. Archaeological sites or historical properties or areas.

The Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer, or the Forest Archaeologist via the use of the North Idaho Programmatic Agreement, has determined that no archaeological or historic property will be adversely affected by this project. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

IV. Interested and Affected Agencies, Organizations, and Persons Contacted

The proposed action – removal of hazard tree along approximately 1.25 miles of FSR 464 – is considered limited in context and intensity, and therefore scoping was conducted internally on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. The Small NEPA Interdisciplinary Team was scoped on October 11, 2017 with no significant effects or extraordinary circumstances identified.

V. Findings Required by other Laws

Based on my review of the actions associated with this project, I find that the Hamby Saddle Hazard Tree Removal Project is consistent with applicable Federal, state and local laws and regulations, including the standards and guidelines contained in the 1987 Clearwater National Forest Plan, as amended, as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

VI. Contact Person

Questions regarding this decision should be sent to Jeff Chynoweth, Small NEPA Team Planner, c/o Nez Perce – Clearwater Supervisor’s Office, 903 Third Street, Kamiah, Idaho 83536 or by telephone to (208) 935-4260 or FAX at (208) 935-4275 during business hours (M-F, excluding Federal holidays, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., PST).

VII. Signature of Deciding Officer

/s/ Terry Nevius

TERRY NEVIUS
District Ranger
Red River Ranger District

8/16/2018

Date

cc: Andrew Lane

Enclosures (1): Map

Map for Hamby Saddle Hazard Tree Removal Project

